

in the way of fines and bribes, and consequently he foments quarrels and encourages needless litigation on all hands, the Syrians being by all accounts one of the most litigious of peoples.

I write of the Christians of Urmi and its plain as Syrians because that is the name by which they call themselves. "We know them at home as *Nestorians*, but this is a nickname given to them by outsiders, and I know of no reason why we should use a nomenclature which attaches to a nation the stigma of an ancient "heresy." They are sometimes called Chaldseans,¹ and the present Archbishop of Canterbury has brought into currency the term " Assyrians," which, however, is never used by themselves, or by any Orientals in speaking of them. The Moslems apply the name Nasara (Nazarenes) solely to the Syrian Christians. They claim that Christianity was introduced among them by the Magi on their return from Bethlehem. The highest estimate of their numbers is 120,000, and of these more than 80,000 are in Turkey. The Persian Syrians inhabit the flat country, chiefly the plains of Urmi and Salmas, where the fertile lands are most carefully cultivated by their industry.

In my last letter I remarked upon the prosperity and garden-like appearance of the Urmi Plain. Its 20,000 Syrian inhabitants usually live in separate villages from the Kurds, Persians, and Armenians, and are surrounded on all sides by Moslems of the Shiah sect. The landlords

or Aghas of their villages are generally Moslems, who govern their tenants in something of feudal style. Land is a favourite investment in Persia, and owing to the industrious habits of the Syrians, the "Agha-ship" of their villages commands a high price. The Aghas often oppress the peasants, but the tenure of houses is fairly secure, and according to Canon Maclean, to whom I am indebted for

¹ A name usually applied to the Roman Uniat at Mosul.